

Zakaat - Spiritual Growth and Purification

Linguistically, the word Zakah means purity and growth. Allah says, "Take from their wealth a sadaqah, in order to purify them and sanctify them (with it)." As an Islamic term, zakah is an, ordained right to specific wealth from a specific group at a specific time to achieve Allah's pleasure and to purify the self, wealth and the society as a whole'.

Therefore ... Zakah is

* **A TRANSFER OF POSSESSIONS** and not a favor or a gift, given by the owner of the wealth to those who deserve it, in accordance with the Qur'aan and the Sunnah.

* **CONSIDERED IN A SPECIFIED PORTION** of the wealth, determined according to specific principles.

* **NOT DUE ON ALL TYPES OF WEALTH** There are certain conditions that should be fulfilled in order not to pay zakah on one's wealth.

* **DUE ON WEALTH THAT HAS FULFILLED THE NISAAB** (limit of exemption or minimum amount of one's holding that is liable to zakah). Having this condition ensures social justice and reduces the differences among social classes. It also guarantees sufficient equalization.

* **MONEYS COLLECTED THAT IS DISPOSED** of in a specific way, to specific persons.

Zakah was instituted amongst the Muslims to carry out a variety of objectives. Islam ordained zakah to achieve, through it, social justice and sublime moral and spiritual values. It is a criterion for the believers and a way to success in this life and the next. Allah says, "Who establish worship and spend of that we have bestowed on them, these are they who are in truth believers. For them are grades of honor with their Lord, and forgiveness, and a beautiful provision." [8:3-4]

Throughout our history, whenever Muslims truthfully applied the system of zakah, as Allah and His Messenger have ordained, the splendid objectives of zakah were fulfilled and its great effects appeared within the lives of individuals and the society. We must remember that first and foremost, Zakah is an act of worship. Giving zakah is an act of obedience to the command of Allah, and a fulfillment of His Covenant. The giver hopes that by giving it, he will receive a good reward in the Hereafter, and the growth and blessing of his wealth in this life.

ZAKAH ALSO ...

* **... IS A PURIFICATION FROM STINGINESS**, envy and greed. Islam recognizes the instinctive love of wealth and love of the self, stinginess is a part of what humans are, "And human inner selves are swayed by stinginess." [4:128] To deal with this, Islam treats it psychologically, by attraction and intimidation. Islam requests that the niggardly self be generous and sacrifices what is dear to it, with the hope of attaining something better. For Allah says, "By no means shall you attain righteousness (and reward) unless you spend of that which you love." [3:92] By responding to this call, the believers reach the peak of spending and the noblest of generosity, and the side of good within the self overcomes the side of instinct.

* ... **SERVES TO HELP THE WEAK.** When one pays zakah on one's wealth, he fulfills his responsibility towards society and the needy, he does this to comply with his Lord's instructions, "And those in whose wealth there is a known right, for the needy who asks and for those who are deprived (of wealth)." [70:24-25]

* ... **IMPROVES AN INDIVIDUAL'S SOCIAL SPIRIT.** Zakah is a true and practical expression of Islamic brotherhood. When Muslims pay zakah, the society becomes like one family. The Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wasallam, said, "The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs is afflicted, the whole body responds to it with sleeplessness and fever." (Bukhari and Muslim). Zakah also removes hatred and envy from the hearts of the poor for they know that their right from the wealthy is preserved. The Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wasallam, said, "The relationship of the believer with another believer is like (the bricks of) a building, each strengthens the others." (Bukhari and Muslim.)

* ... **EXPIATES SINS.** Zakah brings forth the good and Allah's Mercy, "And My Mercy embraces all things. That (Mercy) I shall ordain for those who are righteous and give zakah, and those who believe in Our verses (and signs)." [7:156] On the other hand, materialistic societies live a life of chaos and loss. Within these societies, hatred and malice grow, crimes are perpetrated, and virtues are killed.

* ... **SPREADS TRANQUILITY AND PEACE.** Zakah is social security for the weak and a protection for the society against disintegration.

* ... **IMPROVES ONE'S PERSONALITY** Paying zakah and helping other Muslims makes the one paying zakah more comfortable with his role in the community. He feels victorious over his weaknesses and Satan.

... **BRINGS ABOUT LOVE.** When people learn about the wealthy paying zakah and their willingness to help others, they quite naturally begin to love them because of this.

... **PURIFIES WEALTH.** The Prophet, sallallaahu alayhe wasallam, said, "Whenever people refrain from paying the zakah due on their wealth, they will be deprived of rain. If it were not for the sake of their cattle, they would not receive rain." (Ibn Majah and Al-Hakim) Only by paying the right of Allah and the right of the poor from zakah is the wealth purified from decreasing, or from destruction.

... **IS A TEST FROM ALLAH TO HIS SERVANTS.** People naturally love wealth, but the sign of true faith is to sacrifice what is loved for the sake of Allah. Therefore, zakah is a critical test of one's faith.

... **MOTIVATES HARD WORK.** Zakah incites people to work and pay zakah. When this is done, they become loyal to their community. This in turn strengthens the community and unites its members